

**Written Testimony of Jeff Noel, Corporate Vice President of Communications and Public Affairs
Whirlpool Corporation**

on HB 5804 and HB 5959

**before the Commerce Committee
Michigan House of Representatives**

December 3, 2014

Thank you, Chairman Foster and members of the Commerce Committee, for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of Whirlpool Corporation in support of amending the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Our company is the world's leading global manufacturer and marketer of home appliances, with 69,000 employees and annual sales of approximately \$19 billion. Whirlpool was founded in Benton Harbor, Michigan 103 years ago, and Benton Harbor continues to be the home of our global headquarters and more than 4,000 employees.

Very simply, Whirlpool Corporation believes that Michigan's continued economic growth can be enhanced through more inclusive workplace policies that enable employers to continue recruiting and retaining top talent. Our state must foster a business environment that values inclusion and protects the right of each and every citizen to have fair and equitable treatment.

At Whirlpool, we know firsthand that a commitment to diversity and inclusion is critical to our company's success. Our employees must reflect the growing diversity of our global consumers. To achieve that, people from all walks of life must be able to bring their whole selves to work so they can contribute to their fullest potential. And we know that we can maximize business outcomes if everyone leverages and shares their unique experiences.

Many companies – including Whirlpool and the majority of Fortune 500 companies – have adopted nondiscrimination policies for sexual orientation and gender identity. However, without state-level protections there are countless people across Michigan who must go to work every day and fear losing their jobs, being denied a promotion, or becoming victims of discrimination or harassment simply because of who they are.

A fully inclusive amendment to Elliott-Larsen that includes both sexual orientation and gender identity is a big step toward ensuring every Michigan citizen can wholly contribute to the success of our state. It's not only the right thing to do – it's something we must do for Michigan's competitiveness. All of Michigan will benefit by sending the message that our state welcomes everyone.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony and for bringing this important issue before the committee.